

Building a Life of Love
“Love with Action”
(Part 4)

Intro: We’ve all heard the phrase; “talk is cheap” and “actions speak louder than words.” When it comes to love, this is certainly true. Telling someone you love them is one thing, but showing them is another. Maybe this is why the Apostle Paul says...

Rom. 12:9 “Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them...” (NLT) How do we really love others? We show them with action.

The NT word for love is agape. There is no one word equivalent in the English language. Even the Apostle Paul struggles trying to describe the profound nature of this type of love. This is why he gave us an entire chapter on love in 1 Cor. 13. After Paul describes the importance of this type of love in vs 1-3 – where he basically says our lives will result to nothing without this love. The sum total of our lives without agape love will equal zero! That is significant! But remember, Jesus said the greatest commands are to love God and others, so this really shouldn’t surprise us. Now, Paul goes on and tries to describe what this love looks like in relationships.

Everything Paul describes as love we actually see in the story of the Good Samaritan. The actions of love are illustrated by this story. Do you remember it? (Briefly summarize) These are the actions of agape love.

1 Cor. 13:4-7 “Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud⁵ or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.⁶ It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.⁷ Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.” (NLT)

What are the actions of love? What does love do? Paul lists 7 actions – characteristics of love.

1. Love is patient and kind

Love is patient and kind

- He’s not talking about the overall issue of patience. He is talking about being patient with people. Love is demonstrated by granting patience and kindness to others. Love brings emotional safety – emotional stability.
- He’s not necessarily talking about being patient and kind as you wait for your wife to get ready and you’re running late. Although, it certainly can play out this way.
- He’s referring to love being patient and kind with people’s faults – flaws – their inconsistencies – their brokenness – We love them with patience and kindness as

they struggle, learn, grow, hurt, grieve, fail and try again. This is where patience and kindness needs to show up.

- People usually don't get patience and kindness in this world. People today are quick to judge – quick to condemn – and quick to be mean. Our culture treats others as if they are disposable. People are just not kind to one another. I've wondered, "Why is it so difficult to be kind?"
 - The Good Samaritan was patient and kind – explain – He certainly could have treated this man as disposable.
 - Who do you need to express patience and kindness to? Are you justifying your lack of kindness because of their faults, their inconsistencies, their different values and opinions?
 - How often have people who are "church people" been quick to condemn and reject others who don't share biblical values?

2. Love is humble

Love is not jealous or boastful or proud⁵ or rude (all manifestations of pride)

- Love shows up in relationships as humility. Love looks like humble actions. Love doesn't elevate self over others. Love isn't jealous over someone else's success or blessing and doesn't flaunt their own.
- The Good Samaritan could have been jealous of the dying Jew. He had access to the temple – worship – prestige – favor. The Samaritan had none of that. He was an outcast. He also could have been proud of his own different convictions of God and worship. They didn't agree at all. YET...he humbled himself and cared for this man.
- Are there people around you that are very different in their beliefs, convictions, values and lifestyle? Is your pride in the way of loving them because you know you're right and they're wrong?
- Are you using your pride as an excuse to be rude and unloving to them? Ignore them? Gossip about them to others? You may be thinking, "Yes, but they're gay – trans – drug addict – a democrat – a republican – or...whatever pushes your button.
- What would it look like to love them with humility? Possibly trying to understand – trying to see their pain – refusing to condemn. Having conversations rather than arguments.
 - But their behavior is wrong. It's immoral – they abort babies – they're trying to change genders – All may be true, but no one was ever attracted to Jesus when believers respond with arrogant rude behavior. Humility catches people off guard. They expect Christians to be arrogant and rude. Because we have.

3. Love focusses on others

It does not demand its own way.

- Here is something our world needs to learn. In our culture today, if we have disagreements or differing opinions, we get rejected. In order to be accepted, we must agree. We are demanded to think and believe certain things. BUT, love doesn't demand its own way. It doesn't demand that we think, believe, and act alike. That's not love.
- The Samaritan and the Jew had radically different opinions, so much so there was a deep hatred between the two groups. Can you imagine the Samaritan asking the Jew to change his beliefs before he would help him? He didn't demand anything.
- What things are you demanding of others before you demonstrate love? What conditions are you requiring of others first? This is the radical nature of agape. It is unconditional. There are no conditions.
- Our fear is if we do not put conditions on love, we will be taken advantage of. We still want some level of control – we want self protection – But this isn't agape. This is how the world loves.
- I'm not saying we don't have boundaries – I'm not saying every person is safe – but the reality is we tend to put conditions on all relationships.
- To not demand your own way is to give up control. BUT in doing this you gain influence. The one who influences the most is never the person with control, it's the one who gives it up. That's agape. It's counter intuitive. It goes against our flesh. But this is what love looks like in God's Kingdom. (Didn't Jesus model this?)

4. Love isn't easily irritated

It is not irritable

- I've heard this phrase many times over the years. "People just really bug me." WHY? Because they're different than you? Because you have unrealistic expectations on others?
- This doesn't mean we never get irritated. Paul is referring to our relationships and not allowing irritations to define them. Love doesn't get easily irritated by others.
- Unlike today where people are offended at everything. Even a different opinion is taken as an offense today. It's a word that gets thrown around as if it gives them some type of emotional power or control. "You offended me" "That's offensive"
- Back to the Samaritan. He had every right to be irritated and offended at Jews. Maybe he was irritated that a wounded guy interrupted his journey and schedule. He could have been irritated that robbers were now waiting for him. BUT, the story says that he felt compassion. Not irritation!

- Who are the people in your life that are irritating you? How can you see them through the eyes of compassion and not irritation? Your spouse – your kids – your neighbor – your co-worker – even someone you serve with at church.
- I have to work on this one. I can get easily irritated. For me it's combined with my need to keep growing in patience. Since I tend to be highly driven and disciplined I can tend to get irritated with those who are not. Then the HS reminds me that people are not supposed to be like me. Compassion works better than irritation.

5. Love doesn't keep score

it keeps no record of being wronged.

- This is a tough one because we all have memory – therefore, we all keep score. How is it possible to not keep a record of the hurtful things others have done to us and respond with love?
- The Samaritan had a history of being wronged by the Jews. I guarantee you there was a list of grievances this guy could have come up with. I wonder if he remembered them all when he saw the Jew in the ditch? Yet, at that moment, none of that mattered.
- This is a messy one, which is why next week we are going to talk about loving with forgiveness. WHY? Because forgiveness is the only way to not keep a record of wrongs. Without forgiveness, you just continue keeping score and you become more and more unloving.
- Some of you have emotional photo albums of wrongs. What do I mean? Lisa and I love to take pictures. Our entire life is documented by the enormous amounts of photo albums and photo books we have created over the years. We want to remember and relive these memories.
- Some of you do this with pain – disappointment – wounding that has come from others. You keep remembering it and you continue to relive it. You may even pull out the album and share it with others.
- Agape love will not protect you from others disappointing and wounding you. BUT, it doesn't keep score or create an album of the hurt. AND, it doesn't bring it up again and throw it in the offender's face. There's no..."Remember when you did..."

6. Love rejoices in truth

It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out.

- Doesn't it feel good to our flesh when someone you don't like gets what's coming to them? It's easy to rejoice over injustice.

- Couldn't the Samaritan upon seeing the Jew beaten and dying in a ditch, thought to himself, "Good, he got what he deserved." AND then, just kept walking. He was basically an enemy. (Haven't we done this?)
- Truth won out because when we love, we love truth. Love is truth in God's Kingdom. If the most important thing we can do is love, then being loving is being truthful. We're following truth! Therefore, we rejoice when love wins! Truth wins!
- In our western minds we automatically think truth as content. Truth vs error. The reality is truth is lifestyle. Truth wins not when you know it, but when you live it. If we never live love truth does not win.
- When Jesus said, "if you know the truth the truth will set you free." He wasn't referring to content. Explain two words for "know."
- To love is experiencing truth that sets you free.

7. Love is unconditional

Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

- Here we see the radical unconditional nature of love. It is an enduring type of love that can never be destroyed. This love endures through every challenge, every season, every hardship.
- What we see in the Samaritan is not just dropping him off at the local hospital (Inn). He paid the innkeeper and promised to return to check on the progress and if there was more that needed to be paid. He endured.
- This type of love doesn't simply do the minimum required. It does whatever is needed and what is best for the other person.
- Most people have only experienced conditional love. Why do I say this? Because we've all had people give up on us – lose faith in us – stop hoping in us – and not stay with us through every circumstance.
- What we tend to know is love that says, "I will love you until...I will love you because...I will love you if...it all based upon some condition. But agape says...I choose to love you regardless and I will never leave.
- I have had many conversations with people over the years about love. Most people say something like this. "Everybody leaves." At some point, everybody will walk away.
- With this being most people's experience, it's no wonder our lives don't change. The very thing we crave the most – the very thing our DNA longs for feels unattainable and so we settle for the world's version of love. BUT, our hearts long for agape.

All this can feel unattainable. Who loves like this? God does. This is how He loves us and now He wants us to learn how to love like Him. It's a process. I'm still learning, still seeing where I fall short, still have plenty of areas where I need to grow. There are times when I have tasted agape love and my entire DNA lights up. I know it's real. I think about people from my past and the few who loved me like that changed my life. I know I want to be that for others. I know it has the power to change lives.

This is why we need to be a church that loves well. If we love well, we will see lives and a community transformed. That is the power of agape.